


Types of external QA in Higher Education

# Types of external QA in Higher Education

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CARDS 2003


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## Lessons from first seminar (Or feedback on the feedback)



1. Theory – practice
2. Differing views  
“One man’s meat is another’s poison.”
  - expectations
  - needs
3. To be improved:
  - European examples
  - Staff participation
4. But remember: no recepies, no royal way!  
 ☺ Thank you for your feedback! ☺

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## In this seminar

- I. Evaluation
- II. Accreditation
- III. Audit
- IV. Actual situation in Croatia
- V. Possible options for Croatia?

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## About types of external QA

*The term “quality assurance” in this report includes processes such as evaluation, accreditation and audit. (ESG, p. 5.)*

[External QA activities] *may involve evaluation, review, audit, assessment, accreditation or other similar activities and should be part of the core functions of the agency.*  
(ESG, Guidelines to standard 3.3, p. 24.)

+ benchmarking

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## I. Evaluation

Possible interpretations

- Overarching term (includes all types)
- Narrow sense (special type of QA)

Do you agree?  
How is the term used in Croatia?

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## I. Evaluation - Definitions

Evaluation (of quality or standards) is the process of examining and passing a judgment on the appropriateness or level of quality or standards.  
[www.qualityresearchinternational.com/glossary/](http://www.qualityresearchinternational.com/glossary/)

Evaluation is systematic appraisal and highlighting of value or comparison against objectives and targets, and “measurement” of performance (assessment, as in quality assessment) against set criteria.  
(FINHEEC Audit Manual, p. 32.)

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I. Evaluation - Characteristics

Reference points:

- mission, goals of inst./program, and/or
- predefined criteria (→ accreditation, if minimum)

Report:

description – analysis + judgements – conclusions

Results / consequences:

not making decision, only recommendations

Follow-up: not necessarily built-in

Intentions:

- quality enhancement
- external view (publicity)

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I. Evaluation – Example: EUA IEP

EUA = European University Association

- ~ 800 members in 45 countries
- conferences, projects, publications
- policy making role
- Institutional Evaluation Programme as a service to members

<http://www.eua.be/eua/index.jsp>

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I. Evaluation – EUA IEP

Launched in 1994 see handout

Over 150 univs evaluated  
Sector-wide evaluations too (from 2001 on)

Intentions (of EUA):

- increase strategic capacities
- develop internal quality culture

Methodology:

self-evaluation + external peer-review (2 visits)


External evaluation of IEP in 2002  
Self-reflection of IEP in 2005

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I. Evaluation – EUA IEP

Philosophy

- fitness for purpose (goals of the univ.)
- institution as a whole, strategic management with possible other foci
- emphasis on the self-evaluation phase
- supportive yet critical

No criteria - Four questions instead 

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I. Evaluation – EUA IEP 

The four questions:


1. What is the institution trying to do? P
2. How is the institution trying to do it? D
3. How does the institution know it works? C
4. How does the institution change in order to improve? A

Evaluation and recommendations by the team  
Consistency: induction course + Guidelines

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I. Evaluation

Questions, comments?



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## Types of external QA in Higher Education

## II. Accreditation

*The word 'accreditation' (Latin ad + credere) means to prove something creditable and publicly acknowledge its worth in relation to external criteria. Accreditation usually refers either to an official approval of HEIs or their programmes or to the awarding of different quality labels to HEIs or their programmes.*

(FINHEEC Audit Manual, p. 31.)

Problem with “official approval”:

**Accreditation ≠ licensing**

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## II. Accreditation

 Accreditation (in HE)

Attestation of quality, proving credibility  
By an independent professional organisation

## Licensing

Permission for operation, administrative act  
By relevant state authority

## Croatia:

Accreditation is considered as a legal process,  
to “approve” institutions (OECD Country Report '06)

**Am I right or wrong?**

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## II. Accreditation - Characteristics

## Reference points:

- predefined criteria (+ mission, goals in cases)
- minimum, “threshold” requirements

## Report:

description – analysis + judgements – conclusions

## Results / consequences:

Accreditation decision (yes-no) (+ conditions to be met)  
+ recommendations  
Based on evaluation!

Follow-up: usually built-in

Focus on: accountability

cf. slide 7

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## II. Accreditation - in Europe

## Types (as to ownership)

- National (regional), public, obligatory
- Private, internatl org., “label”, voluntary  
e.g. EQUIS + EPAS, [www.efmd.org/equis](http://www.efmd.org/equis) see handout
- Self-accreditation (e.g. Sweden, beyond national)

History, trends - East and West

Mixed model: ACQUIN [www.acquin.org](http://www.acquin.org) see handout

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## II. Accreditation – Example: NVAO

NVAO, *Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie*  
Accreditation Organisation of The Netherlands and Flanders  
[www.nvaio.nl](http://www.nvaio.nl)

In operation (in this form) since 2004

## Major tasks:

- accreditation of existing study programmes
- validation of new study programmes (initial accr.)

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## II. Accreditation – NVAO

## The Dutch-Flemish speciality:

- assessing body (VBI / VAI) ≠
- accrediting body (NVAO)
- + recognition by the minister

Remember: accreditation ≠ licensing!

Assessing bodies (VAIs) work within the limits  
of the accreditation and validation frameworks  
(made by NVAO, see next slide)

NVAO assesses these bodies → annual list  
(7 VAIs in 2006, NL – VLIR and VLHORA, B)

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II. Accreditation – NVAO

The accreditation framework

- assessment framework, consisting of subjects, facets and criteria
- rules for accreditation
- criteria for assessment of the followed procedure and of the report of the Visiting and Assessing Institution (VAI)
- a description of the procedure used for accreditation of existing degree courses.

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II. Accreditation – NVAO

Assessment subjects\* („aspects of quality“)

- aims and objectives of the degree course
- programme
- deployment of staff
- facilities and provisions
- internal quality assurance
- results

→ facets, criteria for each subject, as e.g. ...  
(see handout for “programme” facets and criteria)

\* Not to be mixed with “subjects” taught at courses

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II. Accreditation – NVAO

Features of assessment (VAI)

- self-assessment by HEI
- four-point scale as per each subject and facet (excellent, good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory)
- no quantitative criteria (except credit min.), [threshold!]
- internal QA expected on the programme level (3 facets)
- report ends with a conclusive assessment

VAI report sent to NVAO by HEI, request for accr.

NVAO assesses the report (may request additional info)  
→ makes the accreditation decision (6 years)

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II. Accreditation

Questions, comments?

?

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**III. Audit**

*Auditing is independent external evaluation to ascertain whether a QA system conforms to its stated objectives, is effective and fits its purpose. Auditing does not address the objectives or the results of operations as such but evaluates the processes that the HEI uses to manage and improve the quality of its education and other activities.*  
(FINHEEC Audit Manual, p. 31.)

“Audit” is also used in a general sense, like “evaluation”!

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III. Audit - Characteristics

Reference points:  
– (predefined) targets and/or criteria

Report:  
description – analysis + judgements – conclusions  
+ recommendations

Results / consequences:  
Audit decision (passed or re-audit), certificate  
Based on evaluation!

Follow-up: in case of re-audit

Focus on: internal QA system! cf. slide 7, 15

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III. Audit – Example: FINHEEC

By Višnja Petrović  
AZVO experience in Finland

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IV. Actual situation in Croatia

	Evaluation	Accreditation	Audit
Inst. / faculty		(✓) + planned	planned
New progr.		✓	
Exist. progr.		???	
Subject			
Theme			

Clear tasks, roles, dividing lines? Parallelism?

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V. Possible options for Croatia?

	Evaluation	Accreditation	Audit
Inst. / faculty		✓ →	(Later)
New progr.		✓	
Exist. progr.	✓	← ✓	
Subject			
Theme	✓		

Council(s) + Agency? Changing responsibilities?  
One organisation?

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V. Possible options

Your views?

?

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Thank you for your attention!

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